

## Featured Customer/Employee Vignette

**Featured Customer/Employee:** Charles H. Delp

**Location:** Summersville, WV

**Farm Operation/Employee Job Title:** Assistant State Soil Scientist

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*One of the activities that Charles is heavily involved with is making soil monoliths.*

### Monolith Mania

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to work on a variety of interesting projects and the satisfaction of seeing how a project benefited our cooperators and other land users. It really is a good feeling to be able to provide a customer with soils information that can save thousands of dollars.

One of the activities that I have been heavily involved with over the past few years is making soil monoliths. When I was an undergraduate student at West Virginia University, Dr Pohlman got some of the students interested in taking monoliths and putting them on display in the soils laboratory. I always thought that this was a good way to demonstrate the variability in soils and to learn a lot about soil properties when going to the field was not practical. I was not to get involved with soil monoliths again until 1999, some 32 years later. In 1999, the National Cooperative Soil Survey celebrated its 100 year birthday. A part of the festivities included each state preparing a monolith of their state soil to be put on display at the Mall in Washington, D. C. In West Virginia, the soil scientists got together and took a monolith of Monongahela silt loam on the farm of one of our retired soil scientists, Mr. Troy Yokum. At about this same time, the director of the West Virginia State Conservation Agency asked our state soil scientist, Steve Carpenter, and I if we would make some monoliths for each of West Virginia's Conservation Districts as a part of our out reach work. We agreed to do these as time allowed not really knowing just how much they would be in demand and the impact that they would have on educating folks on the importance of our soil resource.

Making soil monoliths is hard work but a lot of fun too. Everyone seems to really enjoy doing this work. My office is located in the Post Office building and we often "pick the profile down" outside in the parking lot. Within just a few minutes a crowd will gather around to see just what we are doing. They are amazed by the process and the way a soil really looks. It is a great time to educate people about soils and the National Cooperative Soil Survey. We now have monoliths in many of the Conservation District Offices, Forest Service visitor center and National Park Service visitor center. I hope to be a part of "monolith mania" for at least a few more years.

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— Charles H. Delp